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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PUBLIC ASKED TO HELP WHOOPING CRANE IN FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

North America's largest migratory birds, the whooping cranes, again are heading north in their annual spring migrations, the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. Reports from the Service's Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, winter home of the cranes, reveal that the last of these birds had left the refuge by April 14.

A mere 21 of the majestic white birds remain to make their way to traditional breeding grounds in the Northwest Territory of Canada. Here the birds will attempt to reproduce their kind and assure survival of the species.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials urge the cooperation of the public this spring in allowing the birds to migrate unharmed to their nesting areas. Only in this way can young whooping cranes be hatched and reared for future study. The migrating birds follow a northward route from Texas through Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, into Canada. The major stop-over is along the Platte River in Nebraska. Here the cranes generally spend a number of days to rest and feed.

In their southward flights last fall two cranes from the diminishing band were killed by gunners, one in Saskatchewan and one in Kansas, although these birds are fully protected by Federal law. Standing four and half feet tall and having a wing-spread of six feet, the average whooping crane makes an easy target. In flight, its long neck and spindly legs are completely outstretched. Its white body and black wing-tips make the bird easily discernible and its blaring, hornlike call--the "whoop" from which it gets its name--can be heard 2 or 3 miles away.

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